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COMMITTEE ON THE EXERCISE OF THE INALIENABLE RIGHTS OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 214th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Thursday, 13 April 1995 at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. CISSE (Senegal)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.35 p.m.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

1. The CHAIRMAN said that one agenda item had been withdrawn since the Ambassador of Cuba, who was scheduled to be elected Vice-Chairman of the Committee, was unable to be present.

2. Ms. CUETO (Cuba) said that the Permanent Mission of Cuba to the United Nations had received an official note from the United States requesting the immediate departure of two Cuban diplomats from the country, which explained the Permanent Representative's absence. She assured the Committee that the Cuban delegation intended to be present at the next meeting of the Committee so that a decision could be taken on the Vice-Chairmanship.

3. The agenda was adopted.

REPORT OF THE CHAIRMAN ON THE INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR ON "AL-QUDS, CITY OF PEACE", HELD AT CAIRO, EGYPT, 12 TO 14 MARCH 1995

4. The CHAIRMAN reported that he had attended the international seminar on "Al-Quds, City of Peace" at the invitation of the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the League of Arab States. The purpose of the seminar was to affirm that Jerusalem had not been settled by Jews 3,000 years previously, as their anniversary celebrations seemed to imply; that Jerusalem was historically an Arab city with an uninterrupted Muslim presence spanning 13 centuries; and that Jerusalem should remain a city of religious tolerance, as it had been throughout its Muslim history. Furthermore, all Israeli efforts to change the geographical, demographic and historical character of Jerusalem, as well as its legal status, should be condemned. To that end the participants had called for the implementation of Security Council resolutions 465, 476 and 478. Lastly, the seminar had emphasized that the status of Jerusalem as an occupied city was a key issue for the Palestinian and Middle East question as a whole.

5. The seminar had been attended by both Muslim and Christian religious leaders and political figures from the Arab world. It had been agreed to hold further seminars, and the next such meeting would take place in the United States in 1996.

REPORT OF THE CHAIRMAN ON THE UNITED NATIONS SEMINAR AND NGO SYMPOSIUM ON THE QUESTION OF PALESTINE FOR THE LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN REGION, HELD AT RIO DE JANEIRO, BRAZIL, 20 TO 23 MARCH 1995

6. The CHAIRMAN reported that the main theme of the seminar and symposium had been "Supporting the peace process - the contribution of Latin America and the Caribbean". Three separate panels had considered the topics of "Developments since the signing of the Declaration of Principles", "Palestinian self-government - challenges and prospects of nation-building" and "New opportunities for action by Latin American and Caribbean countries and organizations". In addition, there had been non-governmental organization workshops to discuss "NGO activities to mobilize public opinion for a just and lasting solution of the

question of Palestine - review of actions taken since the first Latin American and Caribbean Symposium in 1990 and future activities" and "Mobilization and networking by NGOs in Latin America and the Caribbean to promote assistance to the Palestinian people".

7. The panellists had included representatives from Latin American and Caribbean countries. Members of the Israeli Knesset and the Central Council of the Palestine Liberation Organization, representatives of Governments, United Nations organs and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, and journalists and academics had also taken part.

8. The five-member Committee delegation had taken an active part in the work of the seminar, and had noted with satisfaction the meeting's contribution to a better understanding of the fundamental issues involved and the changing political environment. The seminar had also helped to promote international and regional support for the peace process, including concrete assistance to the Palestinians in their nation-building efforts. Among other topics, the seminar had discussed Palestinian needs and possibilities for action by the international community in general, and by the Latin American and Caribbean countries in particular. The role of the Palestinian diaspora in that regard had been of great interest to many participants.

9. Concerns regarding the fragility of the peace process had been expressed by many of the speakers at the seminar and symposium. At the same time there had been a feeling of hope that 1993 had witnessed a new beginning, and it had been stressed that the assistance and support of the international community was needed to consolidate the fledgling process. The statements and documents of the seminar and symposium had demonstrated the unanimous desire of the participants to support that evolution and to contribute to resolving the plight of the Palestinian people by helping it achieve its right to self-determination and the end of the occupation. It was also gratifying that the Latin American and Caribbean non-governmental organizations had been able to lay the foundation for a more effective organization of their future action with regard to the Palestine question.

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10. Mr. AL-KIDWA (Observer for Palestine) said he wished to comment on the recent acts of violence that had taken place in the Gaza Strip. The Palestinian Authority condemned such acts and was firmly in favour of continuing the peace process. However, the presence of illegal Israeli settlements in the Palestinian territories continued to be an aggravating factor. Nevertheless, the Palestinian Authority fully intended to establish law and order in the areas under its jurisdiction. He stressed that military containment had to be replaced by a genuine economic and political solution, and therefore the peace process had to develop in accordance with the agreements reached between Palestine and Israel. In that regard the implementation of the second part of the Declaration of Principles was particularly important; Israeli troops had to be redeployed and elections held throughout the Palestinian territories.

11. Specifically, it was very important to address the deteriorating economic situation, which was actually worse than it had been before the start of the

peace process. The Israeli side had to shoulder much of the blame for that deterioration. The effective sealing-off of the Palestinian territories on security grounds kept them isolated from the outside world. Furthermore, entitlements owed to the Palestinian authorities from tax revenues had not been forthcoming. Israeli policy was thus designed to strangle the Palestinian territories in economic terms.

12. On the same issue, it was a matter of grave concern that the bulk of the financial commitments made by donor countries to the Palestinian Authority had not been honoured. The Palestinians had received only a fraction of what had been promised them. In conclusion, he reiterated that the situation was difficult; it required political will as well as an immediate economic solution. Great strides had been made but further effort was still needed.

13. The CHAIRMAN invited the Chief of the Palestine and Decolonization Section of the Department of Public Information (DPI) to introduce a new DPI publication on Palestine and report on a DPI-sponsored seminar on assistance to the Palestinian people in the field of media development.

14. Mr. TLILI (Department of Public Information) introduced a new DPI publication entitled "Prerequisites for Peace in the Middle East" which reflected the proceedings of the International Encounter for European Journalists on the Question of Palestine organized by DPI from 15 to 17 June 1994 in Elsinore, Denmark. The encounter panel had included policy makers and analysts from Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, the Russian Federation, the United States and the World Bank. Representatives of European and Middle East media, members of the diplomatic corps and representatives of Danish non-governmental organizations and academic institutions had also attended. It was hoped that readers of the publication would find in it useful insights that might contribute to advancing the peace process.

15. The Seminar on Assistance to the Palestinian People in the Field of Media Development had been organized by DPI in accordance with General Assembly resolution 49/62 C of 14 December 1994. It had brought together Palestinian media representatives and policy makers, as well as media experts and representatives of foundations and donor agencies, principally from Europe and the United States.

16. The seminar had examined ways and means to promote independent and pluralistic Palestinian media and had provided an opportunity to evaluate the concerns and needs of Palestinian media professionals in such areas as media and the democratic process, the legal aspects of communication, media ownership and editorial freedom, financing and management, application of new communications technologies, and the training of media professionals. It had proposed a series of recommendations and concrete projects in those areas and ways to implement them. DPI would make every effort to ensure that, in cooperation with donor organizations inside or outside the United Nations system, those recommendations would be implemented with a view to strengthening Palestinian media capability.

The meeting rose at 4.20 p.m.